



# Literacy at Hartford Public High School

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## Test-Taking Skills

The research about test taking suggests that there are differences between high and low achieving students. For example, high achieving students:

- are likely to have positive self-esteem and greater self-confidence in their abilities than low achieving students;
- do not feel intimidated by tests and feel well prepared for all types of tests;
- are more persistent with regard to their school work and doing well on tests; are more likely to use appropriate strategies when taking tests; and
- are more "test-wise" than their peers.

The research also suggests students who are test-wise are more successful in testing situations because they:

- are able to follow instructions and directions;
- are familiar with item formats;
- know how to avoid common mistakes;
- know how to use their time effectively and efficiently;
- can maximize their scores by informed and educated guessing;
- have been exposed to a variety of testing situations; and
- can apply test-taking strategies to solve different kinds of problems.

To improve test-taking skills, there are three approaches that might prove fruitful. Students need to understand the **mechanics of test-taking**, such as the need to carefully follow instructions, checking their work, and so forth. Second, they need to use **appropriate test-taking strategies**, including ways in which test items should be addressed and how to make educated guesses. Finally, they need to **practice their test-taking skills** to refine their abilities and to become more comfortable in testing situations.

In each of our classes, we have the ideal opportunity to help our students. Allowing them to become familiar with the format of the CAPT, the type of questions asked, and the mechanics of scoring can only help them to do their best.

## General Tips for Classroom, Homework, and Assessment Activities

- If you use practice tests, make them a learning experience. Discuss why the right answer is right. Ask what in the text or from class supports or points us toward the correct answer. It is also important to discuss why the wrong answers are wrong.
- Teach students the different categories of thinking skills: recall, analysis, comparison, inference, and evaluation. Encourage students to develop and classify activities and questions by the cognitive operations required.
- Ask open-ended questions that do not assume one right answer.
- Encourage students to explain their thinking, i.e., how they arrived at their answer, conclusion, or opinion.
- Apply information from the text to new and different situations or issues.
- Encourage application of information by asking students to relate it to their own experiences.
- Practice distinguishing fact from opinion and relevant from irrelevant information.
- Incorporate all levels of cognitive operations into daily activities, assignments, class discussion, homework, and tests.
- Use performance assessments to examine students' depth of understanding of a topic.
- Have students develop questions for classroom discussions and practice tests.
- Use CAPT and Stanford Diagnostic results to plan curriculum and instruction for students.
- Discuss in small groups why answers are right or wrong, complete or incomplete, good or better.
- Use brainstorming and other strategies that promote a diversity of responses.
- Practice looking for relationships among ideas by identifying common threads.
- Occasionally engage students in solving verbal analogies, logic puzzles, and other classification problems.
- Have students evaluate their own or others' solutions or work.
- Occasionally assign time limits to classroom work and structure assignments, quizzes, or tests in formats similar to those found on the CAPT



